

Six-Step Guide

Working with artists in your school

This document provides guidance on how to commission an artist or arts organisation to work with staff and pupils in your school or learning setting. **It will:**

- Offer a clear set of steps to consider and will help you to effectively and safely recruit an artist or arts organisation.
- Ensure you have considered the details and purpose of the work before recruiting an artist/organisation and provide practical guidance for creating an artist brief.
- Help guarantee a greater chance of success whilst working in partnership and implementing your plans.

1. Think

Thinking about working with an artist?

Before recruiting an artist or arts organisation to work in your school, you need to be clear about the purpose of the partnership and ask questions such as —

Why are we doing this?

- Why do you want to work in partnership with an artist? What added value will they bring to the learning and to your school or setting?
- Which group of pupils do you want the artist to work with and why?
- What are the learning outcomes you are seeking to achieve for your pupils?

What do we want to do?

- Have you already decided which art form you want? Or, will your brief be open to a range of artistic responses?
- Is there a specific artistic process you want your pupils to experience and/or do you want a product such as a performance or exhibition as an outcome?

How are we going to do it?

- How will your staff be involved and benefit?
- What is the scale, budget and time line for activity?
- How does the partnership contribute to wider school priorities?

2. Write

Writing an artist brief

Once you have the answers from STEP 1 you will be able to create a clear brief, which will provide the recruitment criteria and help you identify the right candidate for the commission.

The brief will need to include what the artist/organisation will be required to do as well as what the school (group of schools) will provide.

How can we do this?

- [Guide to writing an artist brief](#)

3. Recruit

Recruitment

Now you have your brief you are ready to circulate this opportunity to artists and organisations in your area or region. Use local agencies and arts organisations to help you spread the word and/or recommend practitioners.

- You may choose to target a small number of recommended practitioners and invite them to submit an application and proposal.

OR

- You may want to circulate it as an open call to a wider pool of practitioners.

Following receipt of applications and short-listing you will need to interview artists. Ensure the member(s) of staff who will be working closely with the artist are involved in the selection and interview process and safer recruitment processes are adhered to.

Download this [Recruitment Checklist](#) for further information and contacts for local agencies around the region.

4. Contract

Contracting

Once you have made your choice of artist and offered them the commission, you will need to issue a contract. At the point of contracting, artists will be expected to agree to the following:

- Comply with the provisions of Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975.
- Acknowledge the school (or group of schools) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations Act 2004
- Comply with the Data Protection Act 1998
- State any Declaration of Interest.

These are non negotiable and it would be good practice to have copies of any Acts, documents or papers available for practitioners prior to signing the contract or agreement.

We recommend that you work with your Finance or Business Manager in school, they will have procedures and paperwork in place for contracting with external providers. In addition please refer to the [Recruitment Checklist](#) for further information and guidance.

5. Plan

Planning and implementation

To ensure success and a high quality experience for pupils, teachers and artists alike, it is vital to give time for planning between the artist(s) and teacher(s) before the artist comes in to school. Do NOT rely on a quick phone call or email exchange.

Your planning will be based upon much of the detail provided in the original brief, but will ensure all partners fully understand their roles and responsibilities. It will also allow time to iron out details and practicalities, as well as an opportunity to explore and develop the creative content.

Download this [Planning Form Template](#)

6. Review

Review and evaluation

It is important for a school to know its investment of time and money has made an impact for their pupils. Similarly, artists/organisations continued work is reliant on their reputation. Therefore, all partners should evaluate the work at the end of the activity, as well as building in time throughout for reflection and review.

At the planning stage, take the time to establish clear criteria for success and understand your baseline starting points, so that you can evidence the impact of your activity. Agree an evaluation strategy that is appropriate to the project and utilise existing data and monitoring in school where appropriate. Don't forget to take photographs or video footage to document activity as this will inform your evaluation, alongside ongoing and final feedback sessions from both pupils and staff.

Please see [these links](#) to resources and guidance materials about evaluating arts projects.

Examples

> Think > Write > Recruit > Contract > Plan > Review

Six-Step Guide provides the most robust process for artist recruitment and is recommended as best practice. However, we are aware a degree of flexibility is required, particularly in relation to one-off workshops and/or performances.

These may not be seen as a commission and instead more akin to buying a 'ready-made' product or service however, many of the same principles apply.

The following pages show two examples

Example 1

You have received publicity from an artist that is of interest and feels relevant for a particular group of pupils, what steps do you need to take before buying their services?

1. Consider the questions in STEP 1
2. If possible find time to compare the offer against similar providers (speak to a local agency or search the internet)
3. We recommend meeting the practitioner or organisation before agreeing to work with them.
4. Ensure you still follow the safer recruitment processes, in particular taking up references and checking all necessary documents are in place such as DRB, public liability and a child protection policy for organisations.

Example 2

You know what kind of artist you want and its only for an afternoon, you feel the time to write a brief and undertake a full recruitment process is not warranted.

1. Use three recommendations from a local trusted agency, colleagues or other schools to create your short-list.
2. Speak to each of the practitioners on the phone to identify their interest, availability and suitability for the session you have in mind. We also recommend having an informal face-to-face meeting with each of them, if possible.
3. Select the artist you feel best meets your requirements, but take up references before offering them the work and ensure you still follow safer recruitment processes.

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